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ABSTRACT

Information is provided on the content standards and work to achieve them for mathematics in one Colorado school district and reading and writing in another. The six mathematics content standards of the Weld County school district are outlined for kindergarten through grade 12 (K-12), and performance standards are also described and illustrated through a description of a fourth-grade mathematics assessment with samples of student work. Student achievement results are summarized for grades 5, 7, 9, and 12. The reading and writing content and performance standards are summarized for the Thompson School District for K-12, and these standards are illustrated with examples from a high school assessment and samples of student assessment products. Student writing assessment results are summarized for 1993, 1994, and 1995. (SLD)

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Standards Work

How Clear Standards and Better Assessment Have Worked to Improve Instruction and Increase Student Achievement in Two Districts

Roy Romer
Governor of Colorado

National Education Summit
Palisades, New York
March 26-27, 1996

TM029713

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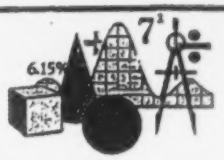
Mathematics



Weld County School District 6
Greeley and Evans, CO

$4,200 Per-pupil operating revenue
Student population: 13,000
63% Caucasian
35% Hispanic
2% other
36% free/reduced lunch

"We have learned that if you are clear on what you want students to know and be able to do and if you can provide baseline data and monitor progress, teachers can and will focus on strategies in the classroom that will create significant gains in student achievement."

-- John Pacheco, Superintendent

"The message [from Greeley's student achievement results] is: it is entirely possible to improve the performance of minority groups and low socio-economic groups without penalizing white or high socio-economic groups."

-- Don Berger, former Director of Research and Evaluation

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MATHEMATICS
K-12 Content Standards

Content standards make clear what students should know and be able to do. The following content standards represent the six broad categories of skills and knowledge students are expected to learn in math as they progress through school in Weld County School District 6. Each of these six standards has a further level of detail that lists out the specific knowledge and skills to be learned by the time a student leaves 4th, 8th, and 12th grade (see example on next page).

STANDARD #1 **NUMBER SENSE**	**Students develop number sense and use numbers and number relationships in problem-solving situations and communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems.**
STANDARD #2 **ALGEBRA & PATTERNS**	**Students use algebraic methods to explore, model, and describe patterns and functions involving numbers, shapes, data, and graphs in problem-solving situations and communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems.**
STANDARD #3 **DATA, PROBABILITY & STATISTICS**	**Students use data collection and analysis, statistics, and probability in problem-solving situations and communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems.**
STANDARD #4 **GEOMETRY**	**Students use geometric concepts, properties, and relationships in problem-solving situations and communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems.**
STANDARD #5 **MEASUREMENT**	**Students use a variety of tools and techniques to measure, apply the results in problem-solving situations, and communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems.**
STANDARD #6 **COMPUTATION**	**Students link concepts and procedures as they develop and use computational techniques, including estimation, mental arithmetic, paper-and-pencil, calculators, and computers, in problem-solving situations and communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems.**

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MATHEMATICS

Content Standards: Grade-Level Expectations

Content standards need to be specific enough to make expectations clear to teachers, students, and parents – as well as to guide choices about curriculum, instruction and assessment. Each of the six Mathematics Content Standards contains lists of the specific skills and knowledge students ought to learn by the end of 4th, 8th, and 12th grade. These grade-level benchmarks – with 4th grade highlighted – for Standard #3 are shown below.

STANDARD #3 Data, Probability & Statistics	Students use data collection and analysis, statistics, and probability in problem-solving situations and communicate the reasoning used in solving these problems.

In Grades K-4, what students know and are able to do includes

- constructing, reading, and interpreting displays of data including tables, charts, pictographs, and bar graphs;
- interpreting data using the concepts of largest, smallest, most often, and middle;
- generating, analyzing, and making predictions based on data obtained from surveys and chance devices; and
- solving problems using various strategies for making combinations.

In Grades 5-8, what students know and are able to do includes

- reading and constructing displays of data using appropriate techniques and appropriate technology;
- displaying and using measures of central tendency, such as mean, median, and mode, and measures of variability, such as range and quartiles;
- evaluating arguments that are based on statistical claims;
- formulating hypotheses, drawing conclusions, and making convincing arguments based on data analysis;
- determining probabilities through experiments or simulations;
- making predictions and comparing results using both experimental and theoretical probability drawn from real-world problems; and
- using counting strategies to determine all of the possible outcomes from an experiment.

In Grades 9-12, what students know and are able to do includes

- designing and conducting a statistical experiment to study a problem, and interpreting and communicating the results using the appropriate technology;
- analyzing statistical claims for erroneous conclusions or distortions;
- fitting curves to scatter plots, using informal methods or appropriate technology, to determine the strength of the relationship between two data sets and to make predictions;
- drawing conclusions about distributions of data based on analysis of statistical summaries;
- using experimental and theoretical probability to represent and solve problems involving uncertainty; and
- solving real-world problems with informal use of combinations and permutations.

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4th Grade Math Assessment

The assessment task "Mystery Graphs" measures part of what a 4th grader should know and be able to do to meet Standard #3 (see bullet 1: "constructing, reading, and interpreting displays of data including charts, pictographs, and bar graphs").

"Mystery Graphs"

Look at the five graphs on the next page. Each graph shows something about a classroom of fourth graders.

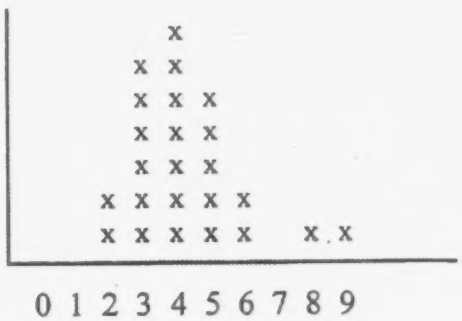
1. Which of the five graphs do you think shows:
   a. The number of cavities that the fourth graders have? 4
   b. The ages of the fourth graders' mothers? 5
   c. The heights of the fourth graders in inches? 3
   d. The number of people in the fourth graders' families? 1

2. Explain why you think the graph you picked for "*c*" is the one that shows the heights of fourth graders.

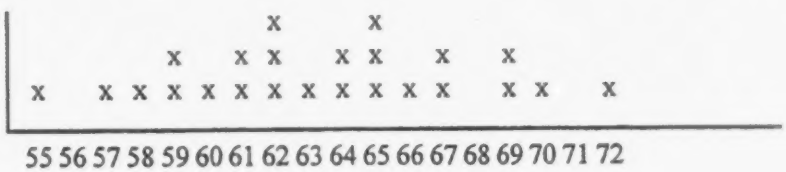
3. Why do you think the other graphs *don't* show the fourth graders' heights?

from Measuring Up, Mathematical Sciences Education Board – National Research Council; National Academy Press, 1993.

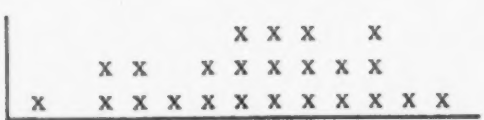
Graph 1



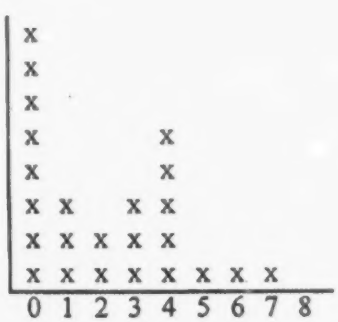
Graph 2



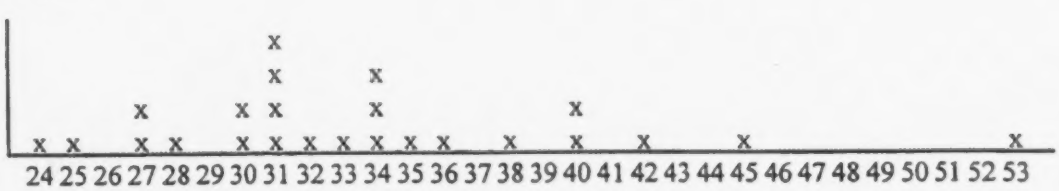
Graph 3



Graph 4



Graph 5



MATHEMATICS
Performance Standards

How Good Is Good Enough?

While content standards make clear the specific skills and knowledge each student ought to learn, *performance standards or performance levels make clear the actual quality of performance expected.* Performance standards define *how well* a student has learned the skills and knowledge in the content standards. Performance standards should specify a level of student performance that is good enough (such as "proficient"). But they also can specify levels of performance that aren't good enough (such as "in progress" or "partially proficient") to help students and teachers know how close they are to adequately learning the content standards, as well as levels of performance that exceed expectations (such as "advanced" or "world class") so students and teachers have even higher levels of performance for which to aim.

Weld County School District 6 has established four performance levels to describe how well its students are doing in meeting the district's standards: *In Progress*, *Essential*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*. **To meet Weld County's content standards, students must reach at least the *Essential* performance level.**

In Weld County, student progress is measured at two stages. First, classroom assessment – which may include teacher tests, publisher tests, check lists, observations, individual projects, group activities, or portfolios – are designed to show the teacher, student, and parents the progress students are making as a result of instruction. Second, district-wide assessment – which are administered following standardized procedures and scored centrally – are used to demonstrate to the community how well schools are doing.

STANDARD #3: Data, Probability & Statistics

A scoring guide for the "Mystery Graphs" 4th grade math assessment task is on the next page.

This task measures only part of what 4th graders are expected to learn under Standard #3 ("constructing, reading, and interpreting displays of data including tables, charts, pictographs, and bar graphs"). Teachers or a school district would need to collect a body of evidence to measure the entire standard and to determine a student's level of performance.

Rarely does one assessment task alone adequately determine which performance standard a student has met. Rather, the school district collects evidence using a number of assessment tasks to make this determination. Because "Mystery Graphs" measures only some of the math skills and knowledge expected of 4th graders, Weld County would need to measure student performance on other tasks too to determine which of its performance standard a student reached.

"Mystery Graphs" Scoring Guide

Proficient Performance
The student's response provides ample evidence that he or she has "mathematical power" – the ability to explore, conjecture, and reason logically, as well as the ability to use a variety of mathematical methods effectively to solve non-routine problems – to solve the test items.

For this task, the student shows a full understanding of the relationship between the graphs and the data they represent. The responses for Question 1 are all correct (a. 4; b. 5; c. 3; d. 1). Questions 2 and 3, taken together, should explain that Graph 3 shows a reasonable range of 4th graders heights, and that ranges of data in the other graphs are not as reasonable. The only real alternative candidate for the heights is Graph 2, but that would imply that there are 4th graders who are six feet tall.

Partially Proficient Performance
The student's response demonstrates only some knowledge of mathematics.

For this task, Graph 1 and Graph 4 are inter-changed (number of cavities and number of family members); or Graph 2 is used in place of Graph 3 or Graph 5; or Graphs 3 and 5 are inter-changed. Nonetheless, graphs showing the correct general orders of magnitude are selected. Some portions of the student's justifications are reasonable.

Low Performance
The student's response lacks adequate evidence of the learning and strategic tools needed to accomplish the task. Additional instruction is necessary.

For this task, at most one graph is chosen that shows totally unrealistic data (such as Graph 5, with a wide range from 24 to 53, is selected for the number of people in the families). Responses to Questions 2 and 3 are missing or indicate that the student cannot interpret the graphs, or they do not show any reasonable sense of the magnitudes of more than one of the items.

This assessment task is not complex enough to measure advanced student performance levels. To allow students to meet higher performance standards, the assessment could be changed:

- *Add another question to the task that asks students, "For the graph not chosen in Question 1, explain what this graph might show and why."*
- *Ask students to explain why they chose each of the graphs they did in Question 1.*
- *Ask students to create their own graph with their own data.*
- *Evaluate the student's communication skills in answering Questions 2 and 3 (recognizing that this level of performance would be measuring other standards besides mathematics).*

Student Work, Teacher Comments and Performance Scores

The following pages show the work of 4th grade students who completed the "Mystery Graphs" assessment task in Weld County's Centennial Elementary School.

The students' work was judged – using the scoring guide on the previous page – on whether it met either *Proficient*, *Partially Proficient*, or *Low* performance levels.

Also included are comments from the teacher to each student responding to the student's work on the assessment task. Letting each student know how well he or she did on the task – *and why* – helps the student understand where further effort or study is needed to meet the standard. In some cases, feedback to the student – carefully worded questions – is enough for the student to revise his or her response so it would meet the standard. And for those students who have already demonstrated that they can meet the standard, teacher comments can be a way to push them to higher performance levels.

Student #1

Name _____ Date 3-12-96

Look at the five graphs on the next pages. Each graph shows something about a classroom of fourth graders.

1. Which of the five graphs do you think shows:
   a. The number of cavities that the fourth graders have? 1
   b. The ages of the fourth graders' mothers? 5
   c. The heights of the fourth graders, in inches? 3
   d. The number of people in the fourth graders' families? 4

2. Explain why you think the graph you picked for c is the one that shows the heights of fourth graders. I picked graph 3 because the smallest or tallest would be the hight of 8 in., 9 in., 53 in, or 72 in. And I already used graphs 1, 4, and 5

3. Why do you think the other graphs don't show the fourth graders' heights? I think the other graphs 1, 2, 4, and 5 don't work because, 8 in, 9 in, 53 in, and 72 in. would be to small or to big, but the graph 3 worked because 44-56 is just right.

Teacher Comments

Would you look at your choices for a and d. Do you see any reason to change those?

Performance Level: *Partially Proficient* 12

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Student #2

Name_____ Date March 12

Look at the five graphs on the next pages. Each graph shows something about a classroom of fourth graders.

1. Which of the five graphs do you think shows:
   a. The number of cavities that the fourth graders have? 4
   b. The ages of the fourth graders' mothers? 5
   c. The heights of the fourth graders, in inches? 3
   d. The number of people in the fourth graders' families? 1

2. Explain why you think the graph you picked for c is the one that shows the heights of fourth graders.

I picked graph 3 because it's four feet with 10 inches leftover. fourth graders are at least 4 feet tall.

3. Why do you think the other graphs <u>don't</u> show the fourth graders' heights? I picked graph 3 because graph 1 went to nine that would be nine inches that's not even a baby. I didn't pick graph 2 because it goes to 72 inches that 6 feet. I didn't pick graph 4 because there are lots of x's on the 0 that not even a inch. I didn't pick graph 5 because it went from 24 to 53 and there was a x on 24 thats only 2 inches.

Teacher Comments

Your explanation was very clear and easy to understand. I do have a question about your last statement - "a x on 24 thats only 2 inches." Do you see anything wrong with that?

Performance Level: *Proficient* 13

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Student #3

Name _____ Date 3/12/96

Look at the five graphs on the next pages. Each graph shows something about a classroom of fourth graders.

1. Which of the five graphs do you think shows:
   a. The number of cavities that the fourth graders have? 4
   b. The ages of the fourth graders' mothers? 5
   c. The heights of the fourth graders, in inches? 3
   d. The number of people in the fourth graders' families? 2

2. Explain why you think the graph you picked for c is the one that shows the heights of fourth graders.

I picked graph 3 because I don't think people would be littler than 40 inches for a fourth grader. I think graph 3's numbers are pretty much averageat a fourth graders height.

3. Why do you think the other graphs don't show the fourth graders' heights?

I don't think the others would work because some are too low of numbers and some are too high of numbers. And I think between 40-60 are average.

Graph 1. It wouldn't work because they had too small of numbers

Graph 2. didn't work because it had too large of numbers

Graph 3. I picked because they were about average numbers

Graph 4 I didn't pick because it had too small of

Graph 5. I didn't pick because most of them were smaller then average

Teacher Comments

Your reasons for choosing graph 3 make good sense. Please explain why graph 2 would or wouldn't work for d.

Performance Level: *Proficient*

14

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Student #4

Name _____ Date Mar 10

Look at the five graphs on the next pages. Each graph shows something about a classroom of fourth graders.

1. Which of the five graphs do you think shows:
   a. The number of cavities that the fourth graders have? 2
   b. The ages of the fourth graders' mothers? 5
   c. The heights of the fourth graders, in inches? 4
   d. The number of people in the fourth graders' families? 1

2. Explain why you think the graph you picked for c is the one that shows the heights of fourth graders.
   Becus 4th is not that tall and not That Sort.

3. Why do you think the other graphs <u>don't</u> show the fourth graders' heights?
   Becus a graphs not have The inches

Teacher Comments

I still have too many questions. I'll need to talk to you more about your reasons.

Performance Level: *Low*

Student #5

Name _____ Date _____

Look at the five graphs on the next pages. Each graph shows something about a classroom of fourth graders.

1. Which of the five graphs do you think shows:
   a. The number of cavities that the fourth graders have? 1
   b. The ages of the fourth graders' mothers? 5
   c. The heights of the fourth graders, in inches? 3
   d. The number of people in the fourth graders' families? 2

14
14
14
14
56

2. Explain why you think the graph you picked for c is the one that shows the heights of fourth graders. becouse I add 4ft to time and I got 56

3. Why do you think the other graphs don't show the fourth graders' heights? 1 It was to littel on the graders

2 It was big for a person.

3 I pick number 3 becoase it was the right fert for my firend.

to littel

Teacher Comments

I need more opportunity to see your thinking. I think I see your reason for choosing graph 3, but you chose graph 2 for showing the number of people in a family. Why?

16

Performance Level: Low

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Student #6

Name _____ Date 3-12-96

Look at the five graphs on the next pages. Each graph shows something about a classroom of fourth graders.

1. Which of the five graphs do you think shows:
   a. The number of cavities that the fourth graders have? 1
   b. The ages of the fourth graders' mothers? 3
   c. The heights of the fourth graders, in inches? 5
   d. The number of people in the fourth graders' families? 2

2. Explain why you think the graph you picked for c is the one that shows the heights of fourth graders.
I picked it because it looked like it was the heigh in inches and no fourth grader would be 72 inches or one inch

3. Why do you think the other graphs <u>don't</u> show the fourth graders' heights? I don't think graph one. Becaus no fourth grader would be 1 inch tall. I didn't pick graph 2 because they wouldn't be 72 inches tall. I didn't pick graph 3 beause No one would be 56 inches tall. I didn't pick graph 4 because there where too little numbers even the tallest person in the class.

Teacher Comments

You have good ideas on your answer for #2. We need to talk about some of your reasons in #3.

Performance Level: *Partially Proficient*

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Student #7

Name _____ Date 3/11/96

Look at the five graphs on the next pages. Each graph shows something about a classroom of fourth graders.

1. Which of the five graphs do you think shows:
   a. The number of cavities that the fourth graders have? 4
   b. The ages of the fourth graders' mothers? 5
   c. The heights of the fourth graders, in inches? 3
   d. The number of people in the fourth graders' families? 1

2. Explain why you think the graph you picked for c is the one that shows the heights of fourth graders.
   I think Graph 3 is the right graph for for graders height because some fourth gr. are taller than me. So the heighest is about 5 feet. Most fourth gr. are smaller than me. Thats why it has 44 inches. I am a little more than 4 feet.

3. Why do you think the other graphs don't show the fourth graders' heights?
   The other graphs dont show the fourth gr. heights because I never seen a fourth gr 2 inches, 72 inches, 0 inches, or 24 inches tall.

Teacher Comments

I understand your reasons very clearly. What if someone said graph 3 doesn't show feet, only inches — what would you tell them?

Performance Level: *Proficient*

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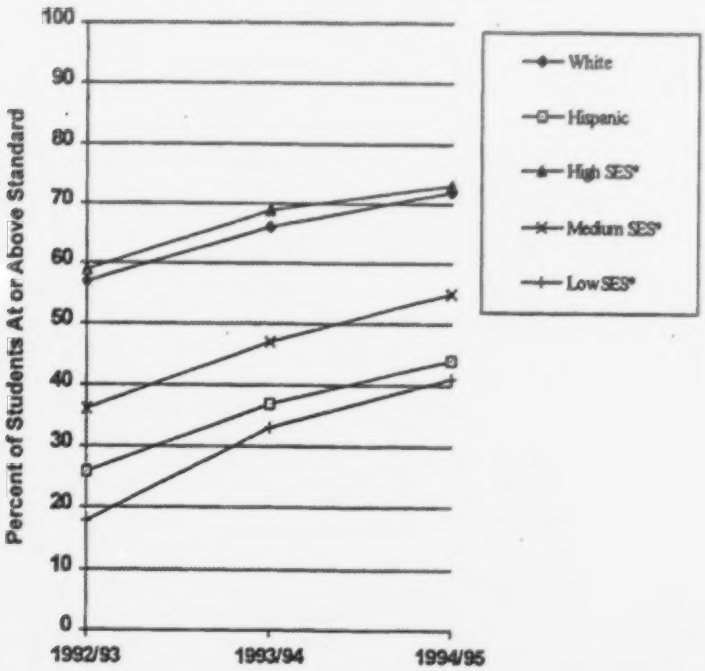
MATHEMATICS
Student Achievement Results

Weld County School District 6
Mathematics Assessment Trend Results
Grades 5, 7, 9 and 12



Weld County School District 6 undertook its standards and assessment reform effort in 1988, beginning with reading and writing. Math assessment began during the 1992-93 school year. District-wide student achievement in math is measured using the Michigan Education Assessment Program. Weld County has four performance levels for students -- *In Progress*, *Essential*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*. For students to be "at or above the standard," they must perform at the *Essential* level or above.

Weld County has seen similar student achievement gains in reading, where it also administers the Michigan Education Assessment Program, and in writing, where it administers a district-developed writing assessment.

ACT scores for all student groups -- boys, girls, white, and hispanic -- also have increased since 1988.

* Socio-Economic Group

Reading/Writing

Thompson School District
Loveland, CO

$4,200 Per-pupil operating revenue
Student population: 13,500
91% Caucasian
7% Hispanic
2% other
22% free/reduced lunch

"Helter-skelter assessment of general knowledge is not working. It doesn't let teachers know if they are teaching well or if their students are learning what they need to know. Standards change this.

"When assessments are based on standards, teachers know what is expected of them. They can be confident that they are teaching what will be measured and can fairly be held accountable for results. . . . When students understand the performance level required, they seem to channel their efforts more effectively than when there's an unfocused, general approach. We've seen that. We believe it."

-- Don Saul, Superintendent

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Linda Gleckler, Director of Assessment
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READING AND WRITING
K-12 Content Standards

Content standards make clear what students should know and be able to do. The following content standards represent the six broad categories of skills and knowledge students are expected to learn in reading and writing as they progress through school in Thompson School District. Each of these six standards has a further level of detail that lists out the specific skills and knowledge to be learned by the time a student leaves 4th, 8th, and 12th grade (see next page for example).

STANDARD #1 **READING**	**Students read and understand a variety of materials.**
STANDARD #2 **WRITING & SPEAKING**	**Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.**
STANDARD #3 **CONVENTIONS, GRAMMAR & USAGE**	**Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.**
STANDARD #4 **ANALYSIS & CRITICISM**	**Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.**
STANDARD #5 **INFORMATION USE**	**Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.**
STANDARD #6 **LITERATURE**	**Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.**

WRITING

Content Standards: Grade-Level Expectations

Content standards need to be specific enough to make expectations clear to teachers, students, and parents – as well as to guide choices about curriculum, instruction and assessment. Each of the six Reading/Writing Content Standards contains lists of the specific skills and knowledge students ought to learn by the end of 4th, 8th, and 12th grade. These grade-level benchmarks – with 12th grade highlighted – for Standard #2 are shown below.

STANDARD #2 **Writing & Speaking**	**Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.**

By the end of 4th grade, students can

- compose a narrative story;
- compose a paragraph;
- compose and share a short informative report;
- communicate ideas, concepts, and feelings through creative expression to various audiences;
- refine the 5-step writing process (prewriting, writing, revising, editing, publishing) and include the editing symbols;
- identify and use simile, metaphor, synonyms, antonyms, sensory words, multiple-meaning words, word forms, and word parts to convey meaning;
- develop and use story elements (such as webbing or mapping) in writing or sharing;
- form legible D'Nealian letters when writing in cursive; and
- use legible handwriting or work-processing in paragraphs, stories, and reports.

By the end of 7th grade, students can

- develop and write paragraph outlines;
- write process paragraphs;
- use higher-level thinking skills to respond to literature;
- share published pieces aloud and/or submit for publication;
- communicate ideas through creative expression;
- write a short report related to a curriculum area using the 5-step writing process steps;
- demonstrate an increase in vocabulary by relating new vocabulary to prior knowledge through daily opportunities to listen, speak, write, and read meaningful text;
- explore use of dialect in literature;
- use vivid adjectives and adverbs; and
- use word processing or legible handwriting to publish written work.

By the end of 12th grade, students can

- write creatively by adding to/modifying another author's work and by writing original works;
- write a personal narrative;
- write a persuasive/opinion essay;
- read aloud, present, or discuss elements of a Shakespearean work;
- read or discuss elements regarding literature;
- share aloud writing samples within peer writing groups;
- orally present and discuss ideas related to persuasive/opinion essays or research paper;
- share aloud and discuss writing samples within peer writing groups;
- produce a written plan for developing a project;
- apply various steps of the 5-step writing process to writing a creative piece and a research paper;
- model an author's writing style;
- model genres of literature;
- write original creative works;
- follow the correct format for a research paper;
- use techniques of narration/description; and
- practice using current technology including computers/word processing when composing a creative writing project.

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WRITING

Grade-Level Expectations

Content standards need to be specific enough to make expectations clear to teachers, students, and parents – as well as to guide choices about curriculum, instruction and assessment. Each of the six Reading/Writing Content Standards contains lists of the specific skills and knowledge students ought to learn by the end of 4th, 8th, and 12th grade. These grade-level benchmarks – with 12th grade highlighted – for Standard #3 are shown below.

STANDARD #3 Conventions, Grammar & Usage	**Students write and speak using conventional grammar, usage, sentence structure, punctuation, capitalization, and spelling.**

By the end of 4th grade, students can

- use subject/verb agreement in simple, compound, and expanded sentences;
- identify and use modifiers (such as adjectives and adverbs) when writing expanded sentences;
- incorporate the four sentence types using correct structure when writing;
- compose expanded sentences using correct capitalization, punctuation, and abbreviations; and
- spell correctly grade appropriate words and use temporary spelling only when necessary.

By the end of 7th grade, students can

- use consistent verb tenses;
- use subject/verb agreement, adjectives, and adverbs;
- use correct pronoun case;
- identify and use prepositional phrases as sentence expanders;
- use prefixes, root words, and suffixes correctly in writing and speaking;
- use homonyms and homophones in writing and speaking;
- use appositive phrases;
- write complete sentences;
- eliminate all run-ons and fragments;
- identify and use transitional devices;
- identify and use pronoun antecedent agreement and conjunctions used in compound parts;
- identify and use quotes, commas, capitals, and semi-colons;
- use grade appropriate spelling;
- use quotations in dialogue; and
- identify and use possessives.

By the end of 12th grade, students can

- use appropriate grammar and usage for creative writing;
- apply appropriate principles of grammar and usage to all writing;
- use active verbs;
- eliminate inappropriate fragments;
- write compound-complex sentences;
- use a variety of complex sentence constructions;
- use commas in compound and complex sentences;
- use quotations marks for dialogue;
- punctuate compound-complex sentences correctly;
- demonstrate correct use of semicolon, hyphen, dash, parentheses; and
- use punctuation appropriate to research/ reference works.

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High School Writing Assessment

This writing assessment measures whether high school students have the writing skills to meet part of Reading/Writing Standard #2 ("write a persuasive/opinion essay") and all of Reading/Writing Standard #3. Thompson School District administered this assessment in Spring 1995.

DIRECTIONS: Read the topic below. You may wish to take a few minutes to plan your paper and make notes in the space below. Write your paper on the Writing Test Folder. When you have finished writing, read what you have written and make any changes you think will improve your writing. Do your best to write a clear, well-organized paper.

*****

TOPIC: Suppose your community has received money to fix up an old building to be used as a drug/alcohol rehabilitation center OR as a day care center. Decide which one you think the money should be used for, and write a letter to your mayor naming your choice and persuading him/her that it is the best choice for your community.

NOTES

WRITING
Performance Standards

How Good Is Good Enough?

While content standards make clear the specific skills and knowledge each student ought to learn, *performance standards or performance levels make clear the actual quality of performance expected.* Performance standards define *how well* a student has learned the skills and knowledge in the content standards. Performance standards should specify a level of student performance that is good enough (such as "proficient"). But they also can specify levels of performance that aren't good enough (such as "in progress" or "partially proficient") to help students and teachers know how close they are to adequately learning the content standards, as well as levels of performance that exceed expectations (such as "advanced" or "world class") so students and teachers have even higher levels of performance for which to aim.

Thompson School District has established four performance levels to describe how well its students are doing in meeting the district's standards: *Not Proficient*, *Basic*, *Good*, and *Excellent*. **Thompson School District expects its students to reach at least the *Good* performance level.**

The district considers *Basic* performance as the minimum floor needed to get a high school diploma and, with this level of skills and knowledge, a student could hold a low-wage, low-skill job (at the *Basic* level, students can do at least 9th grade level work – for example, read at a 9th grade level and do work equivalent to the first half of a typical Algebra I class). Although it now grants diplomas to students who at least reach the *Basic* performance level, Thompson School District is aiming for all of its students to reach the *Good* and *Excellent* performance levels. *Good* represents the performance standard a student must reach to earn a "livable" wage and to be accepted into most colleges. Students who reach the *Excellent* performance level have high-level skills and knowledge to be accepted at competitive colleges or universities.

Standard #2: Writing & Speaking	Standard #3: Conventions, Grammar & Usage

A scoring guide for Thompson School District's writing assessment for high school writing is on the next two pages. The district's high school writing assessment measures persuasive writing and use of grammar, punctuation, and word choice.

Thompson School District students must score at least at the *Basic* level (a score of "2" in all of the categories) on the assessment to graduate. Students are tested in 10th grade. Those who fail take the assessment again in 11th and – if necessary – 12th grade. The "prompt" – the topic students are asked to write about – changes each year.

Writing Assessment
Standard #2

Excellent Performance (Score = 4)	**Good Performance (Score = 3)**	**Basic Performance (Score = 2)**	**Not-Proficient Performance (Score = 1)**
The writer has a strong command of persuasive writing. The information used by the writer in support of the position is detailed, specific, and well elaborated. The response is organized and controlled.	The writer has a command of persuasive writing. The position is clearly supported through the use of elaborated detail. There is a logical progression in the argument, although there may be minor digressions.	The writer has a minimal command of persuasive writing. The responses may be lists of clear, unelaborated reasons in support of a position, or the support may be general and/or vague. There is an attempt at organization although the responses may have digressions that disrupt the logical progression.	These responses attempt to address the topic but may take no position or give sparse and/or general support for the position. There is a little evidence of a cohesive plan: (a) the points are not logically related, (b) the reader has to make all the connections, or (c) the writing is insufficient to make the position clear.

Writing Assessment
Standard #3

Good Performance (Score = 3)	Basic Performance (Score = 2)	Not Proficient Performance (Score = 1)
Word Choice The writer carefully selects words to make the messages clear. Words may be accurate, strong, and specific. The writer may successfully experiment with words or use everyday words in new and interesting ways. The writer may use figurative language and well developed imagery.	**Word Choice** The writer chooses words that get the message across but may rely on slang or clichés or use the same words and phrases repeatedly. Specific words may be used, but they may not fit the meaning intended. Words generally are used in very ordinary ways.	**Word Choice** The writer struggles with a limited vocabulary. Words are vague and general. Words create no clear images. The writer may repeat words or phrases or frequently use words incorrectly.
Expression Few sentence formation errors with a variety of sentence structures used correctly.	**Expression** Few sentence formation errors, but little variety. In some papers, the sentences are at a very basic, simplistic level.	**Expression** Many sentence formation problems.
Grammar/ Mechanics/ Spelling Few to no errors.	**Grammar/ Mechanics/ Spelling** Many errors or a variety of errors that do not interfere with meaning.	**Grammar/ Mechanics/ Spelling** Many errors that interfere with meaning.

There is no Excellent *performance level for Standard #3. Students are expected to spell correctly and use correctly grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure at the Good level.*

Student Work, Teacher Comments and Performance Scores

The following pages show the work of high school students who completed Thompson School District's writing assessment in Spring 1995.

The students' work was judged – using the scoring guide on the previous page – on whether it met either *Excellent*, *Good*, *Basic*, or *Not Proficient* performance levels.

The student's score on the paper is shown as four numbers:

- The first number (ranging from 1-4) is the student's score in meeting Standard #2. *See scoring guide on previous pages.*
- The second, third, and fourth numbers (ranging from 1-3) are the student's scores in meeting Standard #3. The second number is the score for Word Choice, the third number is Expression, and the fourth number is Grammar/Mechanics/Spelling. *See scoring guide on previous pages.*

Also included are comments from the teacher to each student responding to the student's work on the assessment task. Letting each student know how well he or she did on the task – *and why* – helps the student understand where further effort or study is needed to meet the standard. In some cases, feedback to the student – carefully worded questions – is enough for the student to revise his or her response so it would meet the standard. And for those students who have already demonstrated that they can meet the standard, teacher comments can be a way to push them to higher performance levels.

Write the final copy of your paper here.

Student #1

Dear Mayor:

I have very strong feelings on the subject of the old building that is to be turned into a drug/alcohol rehabilitation center or a day care center. In any case this will be a great change for the community. I would like to explain why I feel that the old building should be changed into a drug/alcohol rehabilitation center.

After spending 27 years in this town I knows that there are not that many children that need childcare. There are three or more child care buildings in this town but yet nothing for drug/alcohol help.

If there is a drug/alcohol place here people wouldn't have to go cold turkey in some hotel.

Thank you

Performance Level: 2-2-2-2

- Standard #2 (Persuasive Writing)=*Basic*
- Standard #3: Word Choice=*Basic*; Expression=*Basic*; Grammar/ Spelling=*Basic*

2-2-2-3 (1)

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Student #1

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS **STUDENT** _____

Standard #2: Writing & Speaking

WAYS TO IMPROVE:

You did state your opinion clearly, but there is very little specific evidence to support it. You tell why not build a day care center, but give only one reason for a rehab. center. Your paragraphs are far too brief. They need more details, reasons of support.

Excellent Performance (Score = 4)

These responses have a strong command of persuasive writing. The information in support of the position is detailed, specific, and well elaborated. The responses are organized and controlled.

Standard #3: Conventions, Grammar & Usage

- **Word Choice**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

The writer carefully selects words to make the messages clear. Words may be accurate, strong, and specific. The writer may successfully experiment with words or use everyday words in new and interesting ways. The writer may use figurative language and well developed imagery.

When trying to persuade someone, select words that show strong logic & reasoning and/or strong emotion.

- **Expression**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few sentence formation errors with a variety of sentence structures used correctly.

You used only one complex sentence; all the others are simple sentences.

- **Grammar / Mechanics / Spelling**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few to no errors.

No spelling errors— yea! You only missed a couple of commas.

Write the final copy of your paper here.

Student #2

Dear Mayor White,

It has come to my attention that our community has received a sizable grant towards improving the quality of life for those who are less fortunate. I greatly applaud the individual, or individuals who have donated the money for the betterment of others. Now down to business, the reason I am writing this is to voice my opinion on how the money should be spent. Although our community is not without its share of needy children I truely believe a rehabilitation center / shelter is much more in demand by the citizens.

The reason I say this centers on only one place in the community: our high schools. Drugs and alchol are currently running rampant though our school halls, offering our children little in the way of support For instance, in the past two weeks at prom celebrations across the state ten children have died in alchol related accidents. This is a meaningless loss of life, those young adults had not even experienced a fraction of what life is all about. It is not just prom night either, it seems there is a party somewhere every weekend where minors are exposed to alchol. What about the police, do you say? They do everything in their power to stop the parties, but really they have no tools to counsil our children. This is really only the tip of the iceburg, we have not even

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looked at drugs yet. Many may argue that they are not out there, but anyone who says that has not left their house or read any news in the past ten years. Oh yes, they are here, and more people are becoming addicted to them every day we don't do anything about it. Mr. Mayor it must be realized that if nothing is done these youths will grow ups and install the same habits in their own children.

I know a day care center is being considered for this grant, but I urge you to really take a close look at our schools and what goes on inside them. I believe a rehabilitation center would be greatly appreciated and widely used in our community. It is my hope that it would take a great step towards reaching out to our community and its children. I too was addicted to alchol when I was young, and every day I look back and say to myself, "Only if someone had tried to help me." Mr. Mayor I greatly appreciate your reading my letter, and I hope it has helped you in your decision of how to allocate the grant money.

Sincerely,
A Concerned Citizen

Performance Level: 4-3-3-3

- Standard #2 (Persuasive Writing)=*Excellent*
- Standard #3: Word Choice=*Good*; Expression=*Good*; Grammar/ Spelling=*Good*

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS **STUDENT** Student #2

Standard #2: Writing & Speaking

Excellent Performance (Score = 4)

These responses have a strong command of persuasive writing. The information in support of the position is detailed, specific, and well elaborated. The responses are organized and controlled.

Standard #3: Conventions, Grammar & Usage

- **Word Choice**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

The writer carefully selects words to make the messages clear. Words may be accurate, strong, and specific. The writer may successfully experiment with words or use everyday words in new and interesting ways. The writer may use figurative language and well developed imagery.

- **Expression**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few sentence formation errors with a variety of sentence structures used correctly.

- **Grammar / Mechanics / Spelling**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few to no errors.

WAYS TO IMPROVE:

Beginning with an overview & then precisely & persuasively stating a thesis which includes a concession to the opposing view is powerful! Great job of using specific examples to support. Your paragraphs flow smoothly internally & from one to the next. The use of a personal quote as a close is outstanding. Nicely done!

Especially good phrases:
"... improving the quality..."
"... less fortunate..."
"... betterment of others..."
"... without its share..."
"... little in the way of support..."
"... it must be dedicated..."
WOW! words: applaud, betterment, rampant, fraction, exposed, allocate.

Great use of compound and complex sentences. See me about how to consistently punctuate compound sentences correctly.

Pretty good proofreading. Only a couple of spelling errors — not many comma errors.

Write the final copy of your paper here.

Student #3

May 4, 1995

Dear Mayor:

I would like to inform you on how the money should be used to fix up an old building as a day care center. I feel strongly on this issue because the parents need a place to put their kids, and feel safe about it when they go to work. The day care center is also a place where kids can go, and interact with each other. The children would learn good social skills at a young age. The day care center would be a good addition to our community.

This day in age, both parents need to work to support their family. The question is, what do you do with the kids? If we used the money to build a day care center, the parents could bring their children there. That would eliminate one parent staying home, because they didn't know where to bring their kids. Now both parents could work to support their family. Plus, since the day care center

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is put up by the city, the parents would know it is safe. And not worry about bringing their children there. The money the parents pay to put their children in day care would also go to the community. Plus, to many new jobs.

Another reason why we should build a day care center is, so the children can have a safe place to play with other children. Not out on the streets, or home alone. Getting good social skills is important at a young age, because you use your social skills all through your life.

Since the day care center is a safe place where parents can bring their children, since the children would learn good social skills at a young age. We should definitely use the money to build a new day care center. The center would be a wonderful addition to the community.

Sincerely,

Performance Level: 3-2-3-3

- Standard #2 (Persuasive Writing)=*Good*
- Standard #3: Word Choice=*Basic*; Expression=*Good*; Grammar/ Spelling=*Good*

R10019-PFI-5432

PERFORMANCE STANDARDS STUDEN Student #3

Standard #2: Writing & Speaking

Excellent Performance (Score = 4)

These responses have a strong command of persuasive writing. The information in support of the position is detailed, specific, and well elaborated. The responses are organized and controlled.

WAYS TO IMPROVE:

Thesis is clear and letter shows a solid organization into Kids' needs and parents' needs. Each main idea could be expanded more thoroughly. Give more specific examples for each paragraph. Use logic, reasoning and specific details to persuade.

Standard #3: Conventions, Grammar & Usage

- **Word Choice**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

The writer carefully selects words to make the messages clear. Words may be accurate, strong, and specific. The writer may successfully experiment with words or use everyday words in new and interesting ways. The writer may use figurative language and well developed imagery.

In order to be more persuasive, you need "power" words. Use verbs that are action packed. Select words that carry an emotional impact.

- **Expression**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few sentence formation errors with a variety of sentence structures used correctly.

You use a variety of sentence types. Watch out for punctuation slip ups that create sentence fragments.

- **Grammar / Mechanics / Spelling**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few to no errors.

Only a few errors which don't detract from the meaning.

Write the final copy of your paper here.

Student #4

To whom it may concern:

Our city has been offered a sum of money that we are to use on an old buildings for either a drug/alcohol rehab. center or for a day care. As much as I would like to make it easy and say do both I can't so I think it would be best to put it to use by making it a drug/alcohol rehabilitation center. I'm not trying to say we have an overwhelming problem with drug usage but it would be a little more beneficial than a day care center. If we put a drug rehab center in we can lower the use of drugs/alcohol we don't really need another day care we already have three or four start canceling the ones out of peoples homes. With the sum we have been given we could make one nice center that everyone would like and not feel uncomfortable in we could have the best professional counselors/therapists and what not. I really appreciate your time and I to hear from you soon.

signed

concerned tax payer

Performance Level: 2-2-1-2

- Standard #2 (Persuasive Writing)=*Basic*
- Standard #3: Word Choice=*Basic*; Expression=*Not Prof.*; Grammar/ Spelling=*Basic*

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2-2-1-2 (F)

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PERFORMANCE STANDARDS STUDEN. Student #4

Standard #2: Writing & Speaking

WAYS TO IMPROVE:

Excellent Performance (Score = 4)

These responses have a strong command of persuasive writing. The information in support of the position is detailed, specific, and well elaborated. The responses are organized and controlled.

Clear statement of opinion is given, but there are not many specific details or reasons given for your choice. There is no clear organizational pattern or format. You used little transition from one idea to another.

Standard #3: Conventions, Grammar & Usage

- **Word Choice**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

The writer carefully selects words to make the messages clear. Words may be accurate, strong, and specific. The writer may successfully experiment with words or use everyday words in new and interesting ways. The writer may use figurative language and well developed imagery.

For persuasive writing you need stronger verbs and clearer, more specific nouns and adjectives. The reader must be clear who is meant by each pronoun you use.

- **Expression**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few sentence formation errors with a variety of sentence structures used correctly.

Run-on sentences make this letter confusing and difficult to follow.

- **Grammar / Mechanics / Spelling**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few to no errors.

Proofread more carefully for spelling & punctuation. A few pronoun & verb errors "cloud" your message.

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Write the final copy of your paper here.

Student #5

May 4, 1995

Dear Mayor:

Recently I have been told that you received a sum of money to pay for a building downtown to be repaired. I think that it would be best if the money was used to make a day care center. There are not enough day care centers in Loveland.

Day care is very important to me because I have two kids under six years of age. I know that if you were in charge of making sure the day care center was made; it would be the best premium quality day care facility around.

I appreciate your concern for the well being of our community. I know you will make the right choice, and choose the plans for a day care center. Thank you for reading

YOU MAY GO ON TO NEXT PAGE.

1-2-2-2(5)

my letter.

Sincerely,,

Performance Level: 1-2-2-2

- Standard #2 (Persuasive Writing)=*Not Proficient*
- Standard #3: Word Choice=*Basic*; Expression=*Basic*; Grammar/ Spelling=*Basic*

STOP

Take any time left to check over your paper carefully.

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PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

STUDENT Student #5

Standard #2: Writing & Speaking

Excellent Performance (Score = 4)

These responses have a strong command of persuasive writing. The information in support of the position is detailed, specific, and well elaborated. The responses are organized and controlled.

WAYS TO IMPROVE:

Clear statement of opinion but no evidence by support detail. No specific reasons given for your opinion. You are polite but not at all forceful which is/it very persuasive.

Standard #3: Conventions, Grammar & Usage

- **Word Choice**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

The writer carefully selects words to make the messages clear. Words may be accurate, strong, and specific. The writer may successfully experiment with words or use everyday words in new and interesting ways. The writer may use figurative language and well developed imagery.

You used some good words like: premium, facility, appreciate. Select more "power" words. Create an image of need and how many people will benefit!

- **Expression**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few sentence formation errors with a variety of sentence structures used correctly.

Try a few complex and/or compound sentences for variety. You have almost all simple sentences.

- **Grammar / Mechanics / Spelling**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few to no errors.

A few punctuation errors could be caught by more careful proofreading.

Student #6

Write the final copy of your paper here.

Dear Mayor Hubbleman,

Although a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center would be very worthwhile, I think a day care center would be a much better investment. A day care center would be very practical in a community such as ours. This center could provide jobs for those who are unemployed and want to help the community. It could also help our parents to have a nice place for their children to stay during their own working hours. Overall we need to encourage our youngsters in a positive direction and have people to love and care for them as much as possible.

If indeed we made a day care center out of the old building being refinished, it could open up many job possibilities. There are a lot of unemployed, willing workers who would be happy to work with our young children. These kids need people who care for them and the people are there who would do a great job caring for our future. Not only adults who need the jobs but also young adults who may have dropped out of school and need something to keep them off of the streets. Why don't we kill two birds with one stone and give our children the care they need and decrease unemployment rate.

Another reason for a day care center

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would be from the hearts of our parents. All new parents are a little paranoid about leaving their children all day long to go to work, but we could give them a place to bring their children where they wouldn't have to worry about the care their child is recieving. If these parents dont feel that their child is in safe hands, they will not be able to do their job for our community, or provide for their child. We need to keep our community growing, so lets reasure the parents of our community with a well organized facility and let everyone get their job done.

The most important reason for a day care center would be to encourage our children in a positive direction. If we, the people of Loveland, can teach our children and love our children from the first part of their lives, perhaps it will help our future. Most people who get involved in drugs and alcohol need to be loved in some way, because they haven't been in the past. The employees at the day care center would be there to love and teach the children to stay on

STOP

Take any time left to check over your paper carefully.

06542

the right track. I believe if everyone starts out life in a healthy and fun-loving environment, they may live the rest of their life that way.

Children are a major part of this world and its future, we need to make a place for them to live and grow in a healthy environment. We all want the best for our children and the day care center is just the way to go. Our community can grow together by decreasing the unemployment rates, helping our parents and children feel safer and by heading our future in the right direction if a day care center is put into effect in Loveland. Although a drug and alcohol rehabilitation center would be worthwhile, I think a day care center would be a much wiser investi

Performance Level: 4-3-3-3

- Standard #2 (Persuasive Writing)=*Excellent*
- Standard #3: Word Choice=*Good*; Expression=*Good*; Grammar/ Spelling=*Good*

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PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

STUDENT Student #6

Standard #2: Writing & Speaking

Excellent Performance (Score = 4)

These responses have a strong command of persuasive writing. The information in support of the position is detailed, specific, and well elaborated. The responses are organized and controlled.

WAYS TO IMPROVE:

You present a strong thesis with a conclusion to begin — good! Excellent transitions between paragraphs are part of a clear organization of your ideas. Three specific & precise reasons of support are solidly explained. Restating thesis is strong. Very nice & very persuasive!

Standard #3: Conventions, Grammar & Usage

- **Word Choice**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

The writer carefully selects words to make the messages clear. Words may be accurate, strong, and specific. The writer may successfully experiment with words or use everyday words in new and interesting ways. The writer may use figurative language and well developed imagery.

Power words include: worthwhile, investment, practical, encourage, unemployment, promise, reassure, & environment. Can you think of others? Good imagery = "... caring for our future.." ☺

- **Expression**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few sentence formation errors with a variety of sentence structures used correctly.

Good use of sentence variety, especially compound & complex sentences.

- **Grammar / Mechanics / Spelling**

Good Performance (Score = 3)

Few to no errors.

Spelling & punctuation errors are minimal & don't detract from your message.

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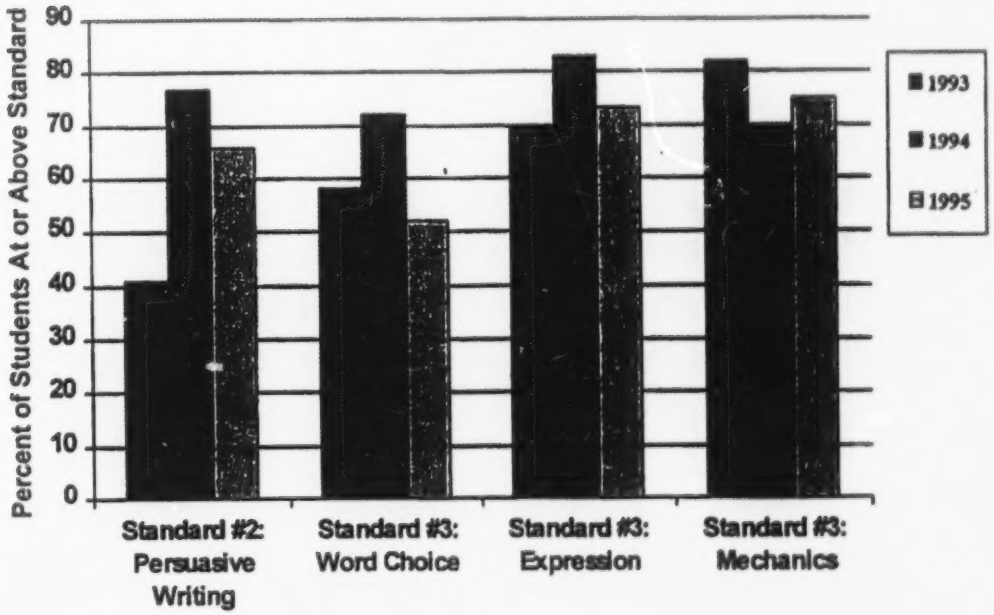
WRITING
Student Achievement Results
Thompson School District
Writing Assessment Trend Results
High School



Thompson School District began measuring student progress toward reaching district writing standards in 1993. All 4th, 7th, and 10th grade students are tested. Measurement Incorporated provides a list of writing topics for the district to use and scores the exams.

Thompson School District has four performance levels for students -- *Not Proficient*, *Basic*, *Good*, and *Excellent*. Although the district currently grants diplomas to students who reach the *Basic* level, it expects all of its students to reach *Good* or *Excellent* performance -- and thus only those two levels are reflected in the graph above.

The district attributes the drop in 1995 test scores in part to new students enrolling in the district who haven't benefited from the district's standards and assessment focus. Nearly all students enrolled in the district for more than 4 years scored at the *Good* or *Excellent* level. Nonetheless, the district is using the 1995 data to examine its classroom instruction to see where day-to-day practices are aligned to standards and where they are not. The district is already moving to provide more writing practice to students.

In addition to writing, Thompson School Disrict measures how well its students are meeting standards in reading, speaking, math, and science.